

Faulty Wiring

It wasn't long ago I noticed a strange noise coming from the air conditioning unit, in the wall of the living room. At first it was almost imperceptible from the other noises such a device would typically make. It started out as a slight clanking sound, only when it was first turned on. I had just accredited it to the age of the apartments and the appliances within. Realistically they weren't all that old in the grand scheme of things, but without constant upkeep things break down and fall apart relatively fast. Everything in the place made at least some kind of noise. The washing machine shook, the dishwasher sounded like a jet taking off and the fridge would kick on every few minutes and hum so loudly I'd have to turn the television up to hear anything over it. So you can see how it wasn't such a big deal for the air conditioner to rattle a little. So I put it to the back of my mind as just something that comes with age.

That was until it started making it more and more often. I first noticed it when I turned it on and the rattling didn't just go away after a second or two.

'I had better tell the landlord so maintenance can come fix this', I thought. After about a minute it once again stopped and the thought faded into memory.

A few weeks passed and I began to notice other strange occurrences, scratching in the walls, the electricity flickering in and out, the occasional thump in the night. Again things that could all happen due to the age of the wiring, maybe a mouse had gotten into the walls, or a noisy new neighbor had moved in. All pretty explainable, I thought. Besides, I worked a lot and really didn't have a lot of free time to do much, so it didn't bother me. But when things started to go missing in my tiny, one bedroom, apartment, I started to worry.

I hadn't been home in what felt like a couple weeks, between work and friends, I was barely there at all besides to sleep and bathe. I figured I should do a thorough search of the place and

see where my things could have gone. The TV remote, a calculator, several pairs of socks, and one shoe, were apparently misplaced. So I went through, room to room (which was really only 4 rooms) searched high and low to find my things and as I did this I noticed more and more small ineffectual things were also missing.

'Strange', I thought. 'Where could these things have gone?' I hit the power button on the TV and sat down in my once familiar armchair, now a stranger in my own forgotten home, and noticed something. The TV wasn't on. I flipped the light switch up and down but nothing.

'Oh for god sakes this is getting a little ridiculous'

I got up and twisted the knob on the stereo, nothing. I went around and tested all the appliances, to see if they were all still functioning. To no avail as not a thing in the place was still functioning, except, strangely enough the increasingly loud air conditioner. It came on with a loud rattle and ran that way for several minutes until it sparked, I heard a loud pop, and then it too died. 'Maybe the power's out and it will be fine in the morning.' I thought half-heartedly. I had a hard time sleeping that night. The neighbors were especially loud and the being without power made me a nervous. I woke up the next morning to find that the power was still out.

I took a shower, got dressed and went over to my neighbors to ask if they were having similar problems. I knocked loudly several times but no answer. I decided enough was enough and went to the maintenance office to complain and hopefully resolve this issue. When I opened the door the smell of stale smoke swept into my nostrils. The place was a mess, papers and ashes all about the desk, peeling paint, smudges on the windows, and a TV with only static bolted to the wall. Sitting behind the desk was a thin, graying man who looked as if he hadn't bathed in a week. I told him about how everything was suddenly not working but the A/C unit, until it sputtered its last. He gave me a sarcastic look and with a gruff he grabbed his toolbox and followed me back to my

apartment.

"You see I would have called but for some reason nothing seems to be working, and I don't think the electricity is out because the air conditioner was running and suddenly died."

"Well let's take a look at it." he said. He went over to it and unscrewed the faceplate and peered inside. He clicked his flashlight on and went to work unscrewing and checking different things when he stopped suddenly and pulled out a tiny thing attached to a cord that didn't look like it belonged. He looked at me with a raised eyebrow.

"This yours?"

I couldn't even identify what he was holding. "I don't believe so, what is it?"

"It's one of those little spy cameras, you haven't been havin girls over, secretly tapin em have ya?" He gave a sly grin.

"No! What the hell was that doing in my home?!" I was getting a scared, and a little irate.

He shrugged "Well let's see where this wire goes, huh?"

He followed the wired with his hand and stopped to look inside.

"There's a little hole in here, it goes into the wall."

He pulled out his hammer and got to work taking chunks out of the dry wall and following the cord. I was freaking out. 'Who put that there?' 'Was this dirty old man watching me?' 'Are there more of those?' All these things went through my head as I watched him work.

"Well that explains a lot" he said under his breath.

"What? What is it?" I exclaimed.

"Looks like somebody rewired your outlets over here." He backed away to show me what he was seeing.

"But, why?"

"My guess, stealing your power. You sure you didn't notice anything?" His calmness put me on edge.

I thought back to the odd noises in my walls, the thumping, the flickering lights. What had once seemed such a normal thing had my heart racing.

"I noticed a few things here and there but I haven't been here a lot lately. I thought it was just an old place."

He gave me a skeptical look and continued following the ever expanding bunch of wires and cables throughout the place. Some wires would branch off to more tiny cameras, hidden in vents and just in the shadows, one even wired into the eye of one of my pictures. 'How have I not noticed these?' My heart had started beating faster and faster as he discovered more. He kept going and, one by one, found all of my electric had been rewired into one central bunch that led to the bedroom. My heart stopped.

"How long have these been here?"

"Not long I'd say. We check all the appliances and outlets before we rent the places out."

"Well where does it all lead?"

He kept knocking holes with his hammer and following the dreaded cables until finally he stopped and looked into the most recent hole he made with a flashlight.

"The space between the walls gets a lot bigger here. I think I can fit in here I see something glowing just around the corner."

He smashed a hole big enough for him to squeeze through and

disappeared into my bedroom wall. He appeared a few seconds later with a grim look on his face and his skin had gone pale. He was no longer the calm, apparently fearless, man he was before.

"You aren't gonna wanna hear this, but there's a little room back there. Bunch of monitors set up all over and all sorts of crap scattered around. Looks like somebody was livin' in there but no sign of em now." He swallowed hard. "This place is starting to freak me the hell out. If I were you, I'd move."

I packed my things and left for my mom's that day, not wanting to spend another second in that place. Over the next few days the police came and investigated the whole scene. They found twenty different monitors all linked up to VHS players in that little room in the walls. Surprisingly though no tapes were ever found. And neither was the thing that had been watching me all those nights.

A few weeks had passed and a box arrived on my mother's doorstep. It was unlabeled but inside was all the little things that had gone missing in my apartment. I also found a dirty ripped piece of paper with a barely legible message scrawled on it:

I LIKE YOUR NEW PLACE MUCH BETTER.